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THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

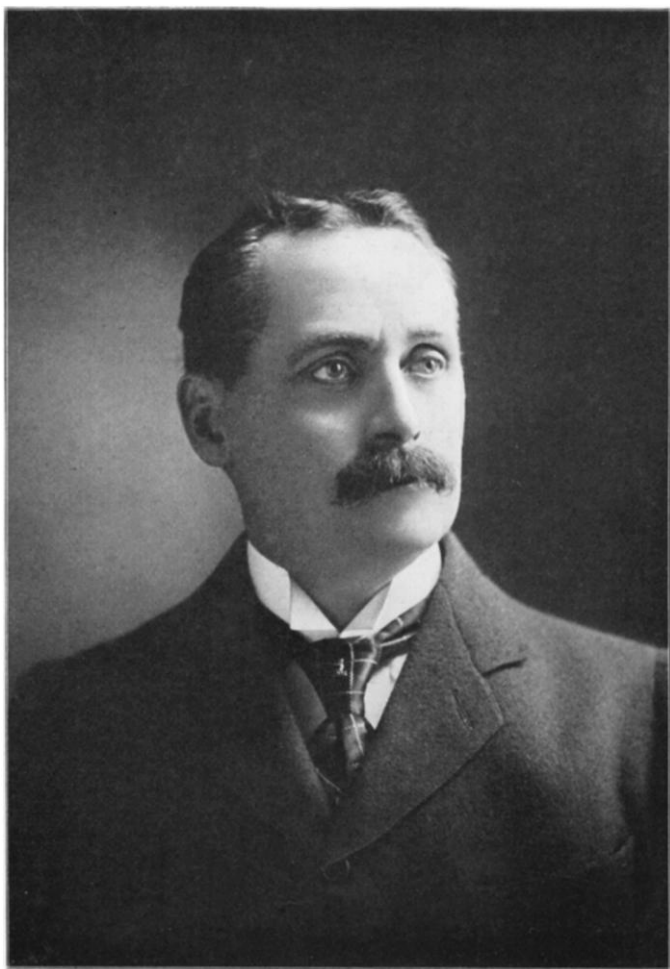
APRIL, 1907

WILBUR S. JACKMAN

ORVILLE T. BRIGHT
Chicago

Rarely has the educational world been so startled as on Monday morning, January 28, when without warning of any kind came the news that Wilbur S. Jackman was dead. He had been actively engaged in his work during the preceding week, and on Saturday evening was at a social gathering with the students of the School of Education until late in the evening. He seemed to rest well Saturday night, but early Sunday morning symptoms of the dread disease, pneumonia, began to show themselves, although it was late in the afternoon before his physician realized the serious condition Mr. Jackman was in. Even on Monday morning Mrs. Jackman could not believe there was any serious danger, but at eight o'clock, almost without warning and without struggle, his life slipped away. A private funeral service was held on Tuesday afternoon at the home, and a public memorial service, on Wednesday morning in Mandel Hall, which was crowded to the utmost with members of the faculty and students. The body was taken to his boyhood home in Pennsylvania for burial. I have heard him wish that he might die "in the harness," and this wish was literally fulfilled.

Wilbur Samuel Jackman was born at Mechanicstown, O., January 12, 1855. When he was four or five years of age his father returned to his own boyhood home on the ancestral farm two and one-half miles from California, Pa. This farm Wilbur's



WILBUR S. JACKMAN

grandfather had bought from the Indians, giving in payment a copper kettle, and it has been the family home for more than a hundred years. Wilbur's boyhood was spent on this farm, doing such work as offers for every farmer's boy, and attending the country school on the hill near by. It was while attending this country school, and while engaged in work on the farm, that he developed that passionate love for plants and animals which characterized his whole life. As soon as he was old enough, he attended the normal school at California, riding a horse to and from the school every day, and doing much of his studying on horseback. He was graduated from the normal school at about twenty years of age, and afterward taught there one year. It must be understood that all of the larger boys and girls from the country round about attended this school, and were the neighbors and friends of young Jackman. This familiar acquaintance led to some exciting experiences with the boys, and the first few weeks of his teaching were not altogether peaceful ones, but his great strength of character, backed up by physical strength just as remarkable, together with never-failing patience and common-sense, made him master of the situation, and his first students have been his lifelong friends.

After this year's experience, Mr. Jackman went to Meadville College for three years, and then to Harvard for two years, being graduated in 1884 in the general course. On his way home after graduation he stopped at Pittsburg at the time that Superintendent Luckey had charge of the schools, and before leaving the city had engaged to teach natural science in the high school. He remained in the position for five years, and during that time had worked out a plan for nature-study in the elementary schools. Here Colonel Parker found him in 1889.

While he was in the high school at Pittsburg, it was the custom of the principal to place thirty or forty young people in charge of each teacher for such personal services as could be rendered from the friendship standpoint. Mr. Jackman asked that the group assigned to him might remain with him for the entire four years. The result was remarkable in the strength of character developed among the students through this personal

association. As men and women, these students refer to it today as the strongest and best influence of their lives. I have read some of the letters written by these men and women to Mrs. Jackman since Mr. Jackman's death. The heartfelt acknowledgments of their great debt of gratitude to their old teacher were most affecting, and this gratitude seems only to have strengthened with the years that have passed. They seem to realize fully that it was the wonderful character of the man, more even than what he taught, that had so powerfully influenced their lives. We are glad indeed that Mr. Jackman himself knew of this sentiment of his old pupils.

Mr. Jackman came to Chicago in the fall of 1889. Never shall I forget the elation with which Colonel Parker introduced Mr. Jackman and Dr. Giffin to the first gathering of parents at the school that fall. For years he had been in search of a teacher of natural science who could bring these subjects into rational touch with young lives. As soon as he saw Mr. Jackman at work at Pittsburg, he determined to have him at the Cook County Normal School. That he made no mistake in this selection I need not say to any teacher or pupil who was in the normal school from that time on.

As everybody knows who remembers the Cook County Normal School, the support of the school was very precarious, and its equipment wretchedly inadequate; but Mr. Jackman went at his work with remarkable enthusiasm and courage. No obstacles could daunt him. He took entire charge of the science, including chemistry, and within the next five years had, somehow or other, got into the school a very adequate apparatus, all of which could be, and was, constantly in use. His classes in elementary science, especially in nature-study, were wonderfully successful, and became celebrated throughout the country.

As a teacher, Mr. Jackman was an enthusiast, but a very quiet one. There was no bluster about anything that he ever did. He was a genuine inspiration to his classes, always insisting upon close attention and earnestness on the part of pupils; but at the same time he brought into his work so much of the charm of his personality and the rare sweetness of his dispo-

sition as to make these recitation periods the best of the day to all concerned in them. Every one of Mr. Jackman's recitations was a model of its kind. His preparation was ample, and every lesson showed the result of fresh study and thought. Many, many times have I enjoyed his classwork, and never have I seen any but clean-cut and effective teaching. His students were responsive—they could not be otherwise. Brightness and effectiveness were the rule of the hour, and this was always so.

Mr. Jackman was a thorough student, but not for the sake of hoarding knowledge. Aside from his love for study, there was always with him the hope that the knowledge acquired might be of service to his pupils. I have never known a teacher, unless it was Colonel Parker himself, who seemed so completely to fill a recitation, and yet to bring out the best results possible from every student present, and make every student feel himself to be a useful factor in the recitation through what he contributed to it. It seems to me that this is great teaching, and I believe that hundreds and thousands of Mr. Jackman's students would subscribe to the same sentiment.

When Colonel Parker resigned his position at the Chicago Normal School to organize and take charge of the Institute of Education founded by Mrs. Emmons Blaine, Mr. Jackman, as well as several other members of the faculty, went with him. The north side school could not begin operations for a year, and through the generosity of Mrs. Blaine several members of the faculty, including Mr. Jackman, were sent abroad for one year's study and travel. Later on this school was merged with the University of Chicago. For about a year and a half before his death, Colonel Parker was at the head of the School of Education, as it was afterward called at the university. The work was carried on in the temporary building provided for that purpose, pending the completion of the present beautiful building on the Midway. Two and one-half years ago Mr. Jackman was appointed dean of the School of Education, and took complete charge of the elementary school. His work was arduous and sometimes seemed almost beyond his strength, but from the time that he took the helm the school prospered beyond any previous

record. President Harper expressed the greatest pleasure in the success of Mr. Jackman's work. This success became more marked each year until the school was crowded to the limit. During the present year from seventy-five to one hundred have been on the waiting-list all the time. As may be imagined, Mr. Jackman felt greatly elated over this success, and his plans and hopes for the future seemed almost boundless. He said recently: "If I can have just five years, I will show what this school can become."

Mr. Jackman was prodigal of his strength. He was a strong man, but the pace was too fast. He seemed never to rest. The School of Education was quite enough, but he edited the *Elementary School Teacher*, besides responding to constant calls for educational addresses and other literary work for the cause at large. He was a forcible and convincing speaker and writer. It is doubtful whether any other man in the country has done so much for the cause of rational nature-study and elementary science as Wilbur S. Jackman. He was also intensely interested in all sorts of hand-work available for elementary schools. The School of Education is more noted for these two lines of work than for any other, but only because it is so uncommon to find them effectively carried out. These two departments of education can ill afford the loss of so devoted and enthusiastic an advocate as Mr. Jackman. But the work he has done in them and for them will go on because he did this work so well.

Mr. Jackman believed in Colonel Parker heart and soul—rarely have I known a man to love and honor another so much. He generously acknowledged the great influence of Colonel Parker over his own aims and attitude toward educational work. To my mind the strongest proof of the correctness of Colonel Parker's educational principles was Wilbur S. Jackman himself, who studied and worked in them eighteen years, and never faltered in his faith.

It was my rare good fortune to know Mr. Jackman intimately during all the years he lived in Chicago, and to feel the full grasp of his friendship; and never a cloud has cast a shadow over this friendship. He never left a doubt in the minds of those

whom he loved and trusted and honored. One can have very few such friends, because men of his pattern are not plentiful. He was a great teacher, but more than that—he was a noble, generous, loving man. His character was rugged and at need inflexible, but he was gentle as a woman and as full of fun as a boy. Perhaps his early Quaker training had to do with the wonderful evenness and sweetness of his disposition, his grandfather having been a Quaker preacher; but there was never a suggestion of weakness in this disposition. His decisions were remarkable for their quickness and correctness. It goes without saying that he was a great favorite with the faculty of the university, and that he was greatly beloved by all of the students in the School of Education.

And we who knew him best, how we loved him! His friendship was so sure and so beautiful. Of the old Cook County Normal School coterie, those who stood by in its trials and rejoiced in its triumphs, Colonel Parker, Albert Lane, and Wilbur S. Jackman have passed on. What a wonderful record they have left of all that is noblest and best in this world! Compared with such lives, how paltry and pitiful seems the mere scramble for dollars! Each of these men has gone just at the height of his usefulness, and when it seemed that he could not possibly be spared. Together with the death of President Harper in the prime of his manhood, does it not all give us pause for thought? We must wonder if it would have made a difference if they could have found time for rest and for play—if they could have known how to rest and to play.

But their lives and their work were noble and grand and beautiful. Perhaps they will seem only the more so that they were cut short in the full strength of manhood.